



The
Betrothed

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T H E B E T R O T H E D.

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THE BETROTHED.

A NATION'S VOW.

BY

DR. W^{illiam} E. GUTHRIE.

When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; . . .
Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow
and not pay.—ECCLES. v. 4, 5.
With malice towards none; with charity for all.—A. LINCOLN.



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INTRODUCTION.

There is no pride which humbleth not itself in a preface ; the supreme judge is there.



A GAME AT CHESS.¹

FOR several years a painful feeling, I may say a feeling of shame, has deterred me from going to Europe.

What can be thought of us in the Old World ?

Many will tell me, ‘ This sentiment is pusillanimity. Is not the way open ? America,—the American is accountable to no one. Let Europe think as she may ! ’

That is easily said, and it may satisfy some, even many among us. It is nevertheless true, that certain words pronounced in Europe recurred painfully to me whenever I thought of this voyage ; and, not being able to conceal from myself their importance and justness, the regrets and reproaches they contained have hitherto postponed my departure.

Those regrets and reproaches which have pursued, and yet weigh upon me, are well rendered in the following broken sentences :

‘ Yes, it is true, . . . you are a young nation, . . . you

¹ This paper has been written in Philadelphia, soon after the contest of the Champion Chess Players of New York and Philadelphia, in the spring of 1866. The work itself I intended to be dedicated to the American Congress, at the opening of its next session, as being then called upon to secure the principles involved in the war. Unforeseen circumstances have delayed its publication.

are rich, . . . your industry is prosperous, . . . but you have slavery, . . . you buy and sell men !'

Where is the American who, when he has become sufficiently acquainted in Europe to pierce through the superficial classes which, in him saluting gold, cast their nets under the most smiling appearances,—where is the American who, questioning the real sentiment of Europe, has not, then, heard those words full of reticence, which contain volumes of morality, which summon America before the tribunal of Christendom ?

The following lines, under the title of ‘The Betrothed,’ have been written with the intention of painting, of rendering obvious to every one, the sentiments which have animated, and which do now animate, Europe towards us.

These being committed to paper, the desire of consulting some well-informed person led me, manuscript in hand, to a friend, one of the most finished scholars that adorn the Philadelphia bar.

I found him reclining in his arm-chair. Upon a table near him was a large chessboard ; and the chessmen left in confusion, pell-mell, as would be dead bodies on a battle-field, announced without doubt that a conflict had taken place. Indeed, my friend alone, general in two camps, had reproduced a quite recent combat between two celebrated champions. Pennsylvania had been defeated, shamefully defeated, under the blows of a New Yorker ! The honour of Philadelphia had been staked, and some said in a whisper, lost.

The fact in itself was grave ; and grave also were the philosophical reflections of a beaten general, seated upon a still smoking battle-field. The fate of my manuscript was soon decided. In some cut-and-thrust blows, my friend the General, still warm from the first contest, analyzed, destroyed, reduced to powder the whole work. ‘Worthless, flat,—beneath yourself,—no logic ; a real stew,—a rhapsody,—and what a rhapsody !’

And your humble servant, confused at least as much as my General after his first defeat, slunk away, and felt no safety till concealed in the most retired part of his dwelling. Perhaps death might have terminated my unhappy fate, if, in spite of my own chagrin, my mind had not been diverted by the combat replete with events which, in my imagination, had preceded my arrival at the house of my noble friend ; and of which the confused heaps of horses, kings and queens, bishops and knights, still ‘on the soil lying,’ were irrefutable witnesses. While philosophizing upon the grave events of the battle, I fell asleep. In the morning, upon awakening, a new diversion presented itself to my wavering thoughts. Johnny, my schoolmate, to whom I had already confided my discomfiture, offered to take me to an old friend of his father, who, said he, ‘likes young men and literature, and will certainly give you some good advice.’ A more opportune offer could not have been tendered me. We set out therefore immediately, and in a few moments were introduced in the presence of John Penn,—so well known to all of you,—a

fine critic, an enemy to tobacco, and deeply in love with his books. He received us in so affable a manner, that I at once felt at ease.

He kindly listened to me. I read to him my manuscript. While following its pages, my eyes would glance up at passages which I considered the most susceptible of meeting his approval, or upon which I had some doubt ; and, from time to time, a word of approbation or a smile would come to encourage me. When I had finished, he pointed out some corrections. ‘ This writing, my dear sir,’ said he, ‘ has all the characteristics of an epic.

‘ The plan of it is easily understood : you personify our young nation under the figure of Amerie, a young virgin ; every one will gratefully acknowledge the compliment.

‘ Upon the lips of Gallic, her affianced and cousin, born and residing in the Old World, you place the sentiment of Europe.

‘ An aged man, their grandsire, while consoling Gallic, unfolds the causes that have produced and developed that sentiment ; and also foretells the future which lies open before us, since we wiped out the stain which sullied our flag.’

For a few moments this excellent man ceased to speak ; he seemed to be reflecting. As to ourself, we remained silent, as much out of respect as not to disturb him ; when he resumed : ‘ Now, you want a preface ; have you

thought of one?' I replied affirmatively; and drawing a little handbook from my pocket, I began :

'The Americans are God's chosen people !

'Can this proposition be sustained? If they are the chosen people of God, what is the mission they have been called upon to fulfil? And, this mission indicated, did they swerve from it, or did they fulfil it? To answer this question, it would be necessary, first, to inquire, where is the American people, the chosen people of God; or, at least, where is the people that, under the first appellation, is entitled to the second?

'The Puritans, inspired by suffering, put their whole trust in Providence; confident in their right, self-relying, they preferred to leave their native land, their kindred, to struggle against all difficulties, and open furrows upon a new soil, rather than retain their place, pittanced by a haughty aristocracy, bowed under rich Pharisees! Were these the people chosen of God? . . .

'The greater number, the offspring of yeomanry, with little polish, rude but upright, firm in their will when they believed themselves in the right,—what they demand is, that the bread earned by themselves should be theirs, without an armed hand being raised to appropriate it: these are the people.

'Another immigration took place; not the issue of the people, but of the so-called elevated classes, the oppressors, the nobles. It comprised nobles ruined by their extravagance, who preferred to quit the scene of their disgrace,

and courageously seek fortune elsewhere, rather than beg and crawl where they once commanded. It comprised also the dissolute valets of dissolute nobles, often already overtaken by the law, who, feeling that in a far-off country a well-bred valet resembles very much a fallen master, exiled themselves—to found also their noble families. This multitude has never known labour. To administer the wealth of others, *i.e.* to eat the produce of the labour of others, is what they call work. To work themselves, such was never their thought. No! they go to seek a fortune elsewhere. Compulsion drove them away; for where they were, they could no longer live without work. These are the nobility; and hatred of work runs in its blood.

‘Between these two extremes, a whole people, led by their prophet, the apostle of brotherly love, came fortunately to take their place, as a tie destined to assuage, to temper.’ . . .

A gesture from my umpire suddenly stopped me. ‘The people chosen by God! for?—’ And he inclined his ear, as if waiting for an answer. ‘Why do you tell us all this? . . . In your love for our country, you are going to tell us things too flattering. We will have to blush! Modesty will overspread our faces with the blush of innocence. Do you not feel that we are already vain-glorious enough, and justly so, since we are Americans? Do not tempt us with pride. Why not let us seek for

ourselves, and find an answer. The people chosen by God ! for ?— Let us look for an answer to this “for.” With a little common sense—and there is some in the nation—the blindest among us, drawing his own conclusions from our conduct, will very well know how to ascertain whether the road we follow ascends—or descends.

‘Why should you not artlessly tell us the object you had in view? Then your little tribulations, your defeat on the glorious battle-field upon which our honour—the honour of Philadelphia—has suffered, but not been lost ; for I hope we shall soon have our revenge upon those New Yorkers !

‘You will thus bring a smile to our lips, and will have accomplished your object in unfolding to us your subject. Can the so appropriate apostrophe, “The Bee and the Coquette,” have escaped your memory?

‘As to your hesitancy to publish this work, because it is not in . . . polished verses, but in a body as it came from your mind, and separated into members of sentences only to facilitate the reading—do you desire to charm the ear? or is it thoughts you wish to convey? Do not force your talent, and in an attempt at harmony destroy your work. Permit me to refer you to the opinion of one of our most esteemed authorities, though born in another land—M. de Marmontel.’

He invited me to visit him again, and closed the interview by placing his library at my disposal. I left

him, highly pleased with having made so valuable an acquaintance.

Now, readers, I have followed this excellent man's advice in narrating the events as they happened. It will remain for you to decide between my two judges.

Ought I to have remained broken down, dying under the blows of the first,—rendering my last breath upon the field of carnage, amid the rubbish, the horses, kings and queens, bishops and knights of the chessboard? Or have I done better, listening to the encouraging voice of a friend less warlike, to consult a last arbiter?

To this question you alone may reply.

A single prayer, very humbly would I dare address you: may it be granted.

Do not open my book if you have been beaten at chess!¹

¹ It will be doubtless remembered, that during the war the battle-ground of Virginia was compared to a chessboard, upon which M'Clellan and Beauregard, and afterwards Lee and Grant, were manoeuvring to checkmate each other.

THE BEE AND THE COQUETTE.

CHLOE, young and pretty, and above all a coquette,
Every morning, upon her rising,
Set herself diligently at work—

I mean at her toilet ;

And there, smiling, putting on sweet looks,
She narrated to her dear confidant
The sorrows, the pleasures, the projects of her soul.
A giddy bee arrives humming.

Help ! help ! cries the lady at once :
Come, Lizzie, Martha, hasten,—
Drive off that winged monster.

The monster insolently
On Chloe's lips alights.

Chloe faints : and Martha, furious,
Seizes the bee, and is about
To crush it. Alas ! said with mildness
The unhappy insect, forgive my error.
The lips of Chloe seemed to me a rose ;
And I thought—that single word recalled Chloe to life.
Let us grant pardon, said she, to her sincere avowal ;
Besides, her sting is slight—
Since she speaks to thee, I scarcely feel it.

What cannot we render acceptable with a little incense ?

CHEV. DE F.

CANTO I.

THE GRANDSIRE.

‘There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt.’—ECCLES. V. 13.

‘But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.’—ST. MATTHEW XV. 9.

WHAT can so darken thy brow,
My son, my beloved son !
Thou art emaciated, languid, gloomy, plaintive ;
On my bosom, the bosom of thy Grandsire,
Thou may’st repose thy aching head.
Canst thou on thy way have met some unfortunate ?
Our roof, thou knowest,
To misfortune offers always a shelter ;
An unfortunate in the path of life,
Dragging his misery,
Has not yet of a refusal felt the bitterness.

Amerie, thy affianced,
On her brow wreathes the virginal crown !
O happy day !
And soon to the altar led,

From thy hand, before God,
She will receive the nuptial ring !

While around us, to crown our wishes,
For the feast all are preparing,
O my son ! what can so darken thy fair brow ?

I.

Hearken to the misfortunes of our fathers ;
That the example of their fortitude,
Since they left the land of their birth,
May bring down peace into thy disturbed soul.

Wretched, unfortunate themselves they were,
When, bent under the inhuman weight
Of a barbarous tyranny,
Of worshipping their God
The consolation was refused !
Unable in their broken hearts
To longer quell the sacred love of liberty,
They crossed the seas,
Preferring with wild beasts to dispute their food,
To creeping here from shelter to shelter,
Exposed to the teeth of human tigers !

O my son ! how sad the day of their departure . . .

How many prayers to the Almighty !

That, severed one from the other,

Strength and patience might restrain in their hearts,

The storm gathered there by sufferings :

That from their lips without anger,

Should escape but words of peace ;

And that the blood of Christ, shed on those hearts of
stone,

Might, from those stones transformed, call out more humane
thoughts.¹

II.

Winter was approaching.

The equinoctial winds unchained,

Mayhap against tyrants venting their wrath,

In furious waves upheaved the waters of the ocean.

At that solemn moment,

Upon their children tears were shed . . .

Holy baptism, O my son !

A communion of loving hearts ! . . .

¹ The first band of Puritans (dissenters from the Church of England) which emigrated to the New World assembled at Delft Haven ; and, kneeling on the sea-shore, their pious pastor commended them to the protection of Heaven, and gave them his parting blessing. After many delays, one hundred and one of them sailed in the 'Mayflower' from Plymouth on the 16th of September 1620.

And their lips murmured : ‘ When shall we meet again ?
 To the wild billows we entrust our hopes.
 O Lord ! have pity !
 Grant the future be propitious ;
 That in after years again united,
 Of our sons with worthy companions,
 We may beneath the old roof,
 At the altar celebrate the union.’

In a last embrace they mingled their tears ;
 And soon, carrying them away
 In the deep furrows of its waves,
 From the suspicious eye of tyrants,
 The sea hid . . . The Pilgrims.¹

And the raging ocean, in its deep recesses,
 During long days, endless nights, . . .
 Engulfed or saved !
 Kept their lives in suspense :
 By the storm enwrapt, with clouds veiled,
 The skies from the eyes of those unfortunates,
 Since their setting out had disappeared.
 The raging ocean in its deep recesses, . . .
 Engulfed or saved !
 Was rolling the ark by the Lord’s hand led.

¹ Is it not remarkable, that it was only by the express commands of King James the First that both Cromwell and Hampden were prevented from emigrating ?

For over them Providence was watching ;
And, towards a new land by Columbus discovered,
Through the storm guided them.

O my son ! recover thy courage. ,
I love to see, while listening to me,
Thine eyes riveted on mine, brighten.
Over my smiling brow, where thou didst often rest
Thy sweet infant face, the storm also passed . . .
But the Lord has given me strength !

III.

Snow as a white mantle lay upon the earth :
From the ‘ Mayflower ’ detached,
The skiff landed the exiles.¹
On the icy strand grouped,
Of Christ, to their minds recalling the sufferings,
Towards heaven raising their supplicating hands,
They invoke its support ! . . .
‘ O God Almighty !
Who hast given us strength and patience ;
Who hast sustained us in days of trial ;
Who, of the conspiracy of the wicked,

¹ The pilgrims landed on a rock they named Plymouth Rock (Massachusetts), on the 20th of December 1620, imploring divine guidance and protection.

From us hast diverted the blows ;
 Who towards this hospitable land,
 Through storms, raging elements, didst lead Thy children—

' O Lord ! do not abandon us ! . . .
 Under the yoke of tyrants,
 In tears we were groaning . . .
 May Thy wrath fall upon us,
 If, forgetting the unfortunates, our brothers
 Who, behind us left, on the shores are still moaning ;
 If, of the blows which struck us,
 Forgetting the wounds !
 If, of our chains, now by Thy hand broken,
 Forgetting the sores !
 If ever, under our laws, . . . under chains, . . .
 Tyrants ourselves ! . . .
 We should make the unfortunate groan !'

IV.

Each with a steel wedge arms himself ;
 But the burning iron from their hands escapes,
 And on the hardened soil emits sparks in falling.
 Could snow, frost, water everywhere congealed,
 Could these, of such men unnerve the will ?
 No ! in hearts where God reigns,
 Love and patience uphold courage !

Trees felled, in a pile are collected ;
The fire by their hands kindled,
Soon towards the skies raises its crackling flames.
Around that hearth in a family united,
Women, children, in one embrace . . .
Through their flowing tears perceive a gleam of sunlight ;
The blue of the sky peers through the clouds . . .
And on the faces of the children
A smile is beaming.

v.

Of the power of men where were the limit,
If, always by their conscience inspired,
They did walk united ! . . .
Conceding to-others what they themselves desire ;
Just, sober, laborious ;
Of experience saving the treasures ;
Removing as they pass, the rough stones of the way,
That their sons, beginning where they left,
On the path of life might not bruise their feet !

Why should generation after generation,
Trampling under foot a tyranny,
Or suffering, groaning, perishing under it ;
Why should they always have to give birth
To new victims ! or to new tyrants !

If, of the Almighty,
 Prosperity, in the heart of man
 Must needs efface the impress,
 Let prosperity be accursed !
 Injustice, satiety, idleness,
 Are the pollution which stains,
 And soon corroding it, destroys the work of God !

Say not that selfishness is the law of nature ;
 And that, thus, societies enslaved,
 By new societies subverted,
 Are an immutable law of God !
 That man ! may justly be an egotist and virtuous ! . . .
 Egotism has its just measure
 In the strict satisfaction of an imperative want.
 It is then a law of nature.
 But labour, protecting man against his wants,
 Of self has marked the limit,
 And in his heart has made room for love.
 From the Saviour's lips came forth these words :
 ' Love each other, and God above all ;
 This is the law and the prophets.'

Man !
 The Lord is present in thy heart ;
 Thy soul to Him adheres ;
 At the very moment
 When, of His law thou forgettest the sweetness ;

Of His voice which cries : ‘ Behold !
Open thy hand to thy brother’ . . .

Thou disownest the accents ;
And no longer doest unto others
What thou desirest be done unto thee :
Already the Lord
In thy sullied heart has ceased to reign.

Men ! your palaces filled with treasures,
Overflowing with gold and draperies,
Where in idleness,
Or in the rankness of your imagination,
Insatiably ambitious !
A luxuriance scandalously regulated,
From the theft of a loaf of bread . . . saves your
honesty !
Your temples, to your pride, to yourselves erected,
Where, with hypocritical words,
To the people eulogizing patience,
And in your liberality, ye worthies !
Throwing back to them, of their gold a few particles ;
For their good, do you say, you administer,
Yet take from them the fruit of their labour . . .
O ye wicked Rich !
Your palaces, your temples, yourselves,
In fragments shall fall destroyed,
The dust by the winds dispersed . . .
God does not dwell in a sullied heart !

Jesus, the crucified Son, said :
 ‘ Love each other, and God above all,
 This is the law and the prophets.’
 And, in each of your hearts, a divine hand
 Has engraven . . . the words of Christ !
 Do not bury them under your iniquities, . . .
 And, always present with you,
 He will lead you to the right hand of His Father.

VI.

Of the Pilgrims, Providence favoured the efforts.
 Forests, melting away
 Before their invincible perseverance,
 To fertile fields, to villages give place.
 Arts at their voice flourish . . .
 From every part of the world,
 The oppressed, in addressing their vows,
 Think they perceive in the heavens, a star
 Which may lead them towards that land of hope.

William Penn, the rich in the soul of whom
 The words of Jesus had taken root ;
 Penn, followed by a whole people, had crossed the seas,
 And founded the ‘ City of Brotherly Love !’¹

¹ William Penn landed at Chester on the 27th of October 1682.

And when the ‘Mother Country,’
Under her yoke . . . resolved to bend them !
On the shores which had witnessed their prayers,
The Pilgrims in a phalanx renewed their vows.

‘ O Lord ! do not abandon us ! . . .
Under the yoke of tyrants,
In tears we were groaning . . .
May thy wrath fall upon us,
If, of the blows which struck us,
 Forgetting the wounds !
If, of our chains by Thy hand broken,
 Forgetting the sores !
If ever, under our laws, . . . under chains, . . .
 Tyrants ourselves ! . . .
We should make the unfortunate groan !

‘ Among us *sin*, against our will,
Has already corroded some hearts . . .
 Forgive us, O Lord !¹ . . .
Better to perish than to be slaves !
To liberty we consecrate this land,
 And on our banners we inscribe :

¹ Speaking of slavery, Thomas Jefferson said : ‘ I tremble for my country, when I reflect that God is just, and that His justice cannot sleep for ever.’

"All men are created free and equal!"¹ . . .

And victory, on the reverse, inscribed :

'Washington, Jefferson, Franklin.' . . .
In the family of nations,
The name of a new nation !²

VII.

Over the heads of our grandsires,
Years had in passing, long since thrown their whitening
frost ;

When Providence permitted,
That, true at last to their vow,
Surrounded by their grandchildren,
Around the paternal hearth.
They should take their seats.

Twenty years have elapsed since I also,
Of the holy hearth warmed again the ashes . . .
For thy uncle with his affianced had come :
His affianced . . . from Virginia, noble flower !

¹ 'We hold these truths to be self-evident : all men are created free and equal.'—*Declaration of Independence*, 4th of July 1776.

² Treaty of peace with England, 3d of September 1783.

Of a beauty . . . of a soul fairer yet.
Thy father with thy mother was also waiting,
For the happy moments which were nearing.

The torch of Hymen was lighted ;
And at the foot of the altar
Both couples exchanged their vows.
What beautiful day after the storm,
Could give us more smiling hopes !

The Lord blessed their union :
Amerie and thyself came into the world,
Two tender flowers on the enamelled green of May !
Children of the same family,
When your mothers, daughters endeared to my heart,
Guided your first steps,
How happy were we seeing you smile ! . . .
Angels of innocence and love,
'Hyphens,' light but strong ties,
Like climbers by the breezes swayed,
Of which the tendrils, as would loving arms,
Cling to the trees entwining their blooming branches ;
So, one to the other tottering, your little hands
Asked for support, and scarcely embraced
The mother, the aunt, the fathers.
At your budding caresses we were smiling,
And we said in our hearts
While uniting your hands :
'May the future reserve them cloudless days !'

Days of love and peace !
May their pathway be decked with flowers and innocence !'

What can so darken thy brow,
My son, my beloved son !
Thou art emaciated, languid, gloomy, plaintive ;
On my bosom, the bosom of thy grandsire,
Thou may'st repose thy aching head.

Amerie, thy affianced,
On her brow wreathes the virginal crown !
O happy day !
And soon to the altar led,
From thy hand before God,
She will receive the nuptial ring !

While around us, to crown our wishes,
For the feast all are preparing,
O my son ! what can so becloud thy fair brow ?

CANTO II.

GALLIC AND AMERIE.

‘Au bord de l’horizon le soleil suspendu
Regarde cette plage, autrefois florissante,
Comme un amant en deuil, qui, pleurant son amante,
Cherche encor dans ses traits l’éclat qu’ils ont perdu,
Et trouve, après la mort, sa beauté plus touchante.
Que cet astre, à regret, s’arrache à ses amours !
Que la brise du soir est douce et parfumée !
Que des feux d’un beau jour la mer brille enflammée ! . . .
Mais pour un peuple esclave il n’est plus de beaux jours.’

—MESSENIENNES.

‘For the wages of sin is death ; . . .’—ROM. VI. 23.

My father ! I suffer ! . . .
The eloquent accents of thy voice
Have of thy son penetrated the heart ;
And in the bosom of his grandsire,
He will relieve of his sorrows
The oppressive weight.

I.

Such are verily the images
With which my infancy was cradled :

Two families, by the wiles of the wicked
 Over the world dispersed,
 And, by the hand of God over the world protected !

As two celestial orbs, in their regulated course,
 At remote epochs in space meet
 And salute each other as they pass ;
 Two families by the deep divided,
 At some distant epoch of their wandering fate,
 Meet to celebrate the union of their sons,
 To salute the sacred altar of the paternal hearth ;
 Before into the maze of life,
 The hand of destiny again casts them forth ! . . .

When may we, in one flock gathered,
 Around the old fireside for ever united,
 Implore the Shepherd, whose image on the blackened
 cross
 Over the mantle suspended,
 Of our deserted hearth seems to guard the sanctity !

II.

Since of my parents, the grievous loss
 Is lying heavily upon me,
 Thy voice, O my Sire ! with a mother's sweet tones,
 Has assuaged my sorrows :
 And for thee in my heart, my love is unbounded !

But a dark cloud overshadows my soul . . .

My father ! O my father well-beloved !

I am emaciated, languid, gloomy, plaintive ;
Upon thy bosom, as upon the bosom of my mother,
I will repose my aching head, and there confide

What of my brow veils the serenity ! . . .

With a full sweet hope my soul was cradled.

O Amerie ! my affianced, I love thee ! . . .

From my infancy thou hast been my hope !

That thou mightst prosper and beautify,

Was my dream . . . and

When my mother, guiding my childhood,
To the destitute taught me to give my bread ;

Amerie ! . . . in my heart, in my prayer,
After the name of my mother I placed thy name :
For while relieving poverty, my mother said :

‘ Giving to the poor is returning unto the Lord,
What to ourselves the Lord has lent.’

And in my child’s heart it seemed
That, wise and good as well as beautiful,

Amerie, far away beyond the seas,
Was thinking of me . . . and perhaps also

Upon the wounds of a sufferer

As balm from her voice, shedding the tears of a child . . .

O Amerie ! I love thee !

And while for us the hymeneal altar is prepared,

My heart suffers . . .
And, bursting its terrestrial envelope,
To my poor mother would wish to return! . . .

III.

When to obey my mother's desire,
Leaving her grave yet fresh,
I also, of the ocean crossed the vast extent,
Towards Amerie! the Amerie of my dreams!
My overburthened heart to a friend's heart flew.

As the land first to my gaze appeared,
Confused and plaintive sounds, distant music,
To the accents of my sadness
Seemed to respond, and soothe my grief¹ . . .
Upon the shores of Virginia,
Virginia! . . . a name to me endeared,
In arms opened to receive me,
With my tears, tears were mingled,
And soon were blended with smiles.
Powerful attraction of family ties,
On that day my heart felt thee!

¹ The history of generations of broken hearts is heard in the plaintive songs of slaves on the plantations of America, as well as among the peasantry of Europe, to whom they were transmitted by their forefathers when they were slaves or serfs.

IV.

In a sumptuous dwelling, where grandeur and dignity
With full hands, upon its guests
Shed the favours of a boundless hospitality,
The first days were passed . . . and my rested limbs
Recovered their elasticity.
But alas ! . . . my tranquillity
By some foreboding evil was soon disturbed :
Perhaps my troubled spirit was the cause.
The charm of sweetness which, in my love
As with an azured atmosphere,
Enshrined my kindred . . . the charm had paled :
Colours less soft, touches more definite,
Were delineated upon their features.

Repose from my bed had vanished :
Towards the morning only my weary eyelids closed ;
And on awakening from a restless sleep,
My rigid members could of my body scarce bear the
weight.
For when night, upon the earth descending,
Had ended the labours of the fields ;
When everywhere in nature, the hour of rest
Had silenced the clamours of the day ;
To my couch retired, my eyes in vain sought sleep.
Strange rumours reached my ears ;

Obscurity surrounding me,
Peopled itself with phantoms ;
And though joyous songs were sometimes heard,
In the distance there seemed to be plaintive cries,
 Noises of chains, blasphemies, prayers,
 Blended in the calm of night.
And when the gale bowed in its rage
The stately heads of forest trees,
Cries, chains, blasphemies, prayers,
Clashing, borne upon the wind,
Like so many sharp blows made my heart bleed.
Or if through wakefulness, fearing to lose my reason,
 I quit my couch and, over the plain
 By the rays of the moon softly lit,
 To refresh my spirits I cast my eyes ;
 It seemed to me that silent shadows
From behind each screen stealthily moved away.
 And in my disturbed reason, of Hell
 In spite of me, I had a glimpse . . .
 The fires, the sufferings, the victims,
 The spirits . . . before me passing.

v.

One night, O terrible night !
With grief wearied my eyes were closed ;
A fearful sound from this painful sleep

Suddenly aroused me :
Terrible heart-rending cries ! . . .
Of the infernal regions they are no longer shades,
But victims by some tiger slain !
Seizing my sword, by the cries guided,
Over the fields terror precipitates my steps.

O my father !
What a terrible spectacle strikes my vision !
A creature of God, a woman, to a tree bound,
By a fiend in human shape tortured,
Under terrible blows groans and dies ! . . .
The murderer, by her blood at each blow gushing forth,
Is bespattered with the blot of infamy ! . . .

Her unhappy children,
Who, to protect her, had upon the monster rushed,
By other tormentors are withheld.
The blasphemies of the cruel wretches,
The cries of the victim afar off spread dismay.

By terror visited,
No one dares to raise his eyes . . .
They repeat, trembling, smiling :
' Good master ! good master ! ' . . .

O Lord ! canst Thou permit such iniquity ! . . .
On the assassin I leaped !
In a moment at my feet a lifeless form he lay ;
And before the astounded people, I freed the victim !

Then, under the emotions of such a horrid scene,
On the reddened soil I fell exhausted.¹

VI.

When at break of day my eyes to light reopened,
Near my couch Amerie was on her knees praying !
The rays of the sun on the awakening fields

Bestowed hope and life . . .

And I felt as though emerging from a dreadful dream.
'Thou hast greatly suffered,' said the kneeling angel ;
And pressing her hand, my tears began to flow.

When under her care my strength returned,
Led back towards the ocean, I took my way ;
In the vessel driven by the winds,
The plaintive strains of the shore
Pursued me, dying in the distance.

Soon in the bosom of my sire, my father !
I came as now, to conceal the sadness
Which since that day is imprinted on my face ;
To seek for peace, if it were yet on earth . . .
For here my dreams still haunt me !

¹ Such scenes were, in fact, seldom enacted in Virginia. There, and in other border states (except in remote parts), the usual punishment was to sell the slaves 'down south,' where they were but too frequent.

When in the evening, praying for those I love,
Amerie appears before me ;
In her proud carriage,
Under the sumptuous folds of her ample robe,
Which trails like the mantle of a queen,
I feel the yoke of the master ; . . .
The sweat of the oppressed
Into light white tufts transformed,¹
And in our marts, for those luxuries exchanged !

O my father ! I suffer ! . . .
When in my dreams, of my well-beloved
I press the hand . . . it is icy cold,
As was the hand of the poor victim ! . . .
And when this very night, thinking of our union,
In her fair locks I wound my fingers,
And to my bosom drew her head ;
The flowers which so gracefully adorned
Her virginal brow . . . were blood-bespotted !
And that head so endeared, in my hands transforming,
O my father !
To my terrified gaze exhibited . . .
The dark and dying head of the victim !
And in my room, by the light of heaven illumined,
Around the walls in order were defiling . . .

¹ The 'appearance of a cotton-field is extremely beautiful ; the glossy dark-green leaves contrast finely with the delicate pink buds as they burst and expand in silken tufts of snowy white.

Chains, collars, whips, the auction-block, the traders,
The hunter and his sneaking, howling hounds ;—
Instruments of torture, by men invented !

A dark and gloomy cloud obscures my brow.
Father ! O my beloved father !
I am emaciated, languid, gloomy, plaintive ;
With a full sweet hope my soul was cradled,
O Amerie ! I love thee ! . . .
And while for us the hymeneal altar is prepared,
My heart suffers . . .
And bursting its terrestrial envelope,
To my poor mother would wish to return ! . . .

CANTO III.

THE ATONEMENT.

'... They have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward.'—ISAIAH I. 4.

'Wash you, make you clean ; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes. . . .

'Learn to do well, seek judgment, relieve the oppressed. . . .

'... Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow.'—ISAIAH I. 16, 17, 18.

O MY son, my beloved child !
Deeply do I feel thy grief.
But on the wounds of thy soul
Time will pour a healing balm ;
With health thy spirits will return ;

From thy eyes for ever
Those sad images will vanish :

For the plaintive notes by the winds brought to thee,
Into joyous songs will be converted.
Into flowers and bountiful harvests,
The genial blood of the victims,
Fecundating the soil, will be transformed.
On the flowery sward the happy child will play . . .

Amerie, thy affianced,
Her brow bound with the virginal crown,
From thy hand before God,
Will receive the nuptial ring !

I.

Immutable decrees, man, with impunity
Is forbidden to transgress.
When, deaf to the voice of love
Which in the right way incessantly calls him,
He thinks, by a contract passed between guilty
ones,
Under statutes to conceal his offences ;
Like oil penetrating the tissue of a thick cloth,
At its surface reappears ;
So, the stain of his transgressions,
Of the mass of his fragile laws
Piercing the thick layer, reappears indelible.

As the crested billows of the advancing tide
Overtake and engulf the imprudent,
Who from the moving sands too slowly depart ;
So the foul invading stain,
With its spreading margin, overwhelms the rash
Who, of the Supreme Being unmindful,
Defying the wrath of heaven . . .

On an altar by their guilty hands erected,
Worship of their sins the Idol !¹ . . .

Man forgets that sin without respite,
Haunts the footsteps of the guilty ;
Visits him, even unto his children ;
That sin must be washed away,
Or at last, God withdrawing Himself,
His body, his being covered with leprosy,
In eternity is for ever consumed.

It is in human blood that sins are cleansed ! . . .

When the Lord Himself, by His prophets,
Of the tribes of Israel ordained the destruction,
Of a sin . . . less heinous perhaps, were they guilty !

II.

O Lord ! mayst Thou forgive those who,
For paltry ill-gotten lucre to their pomp added,
In Africa gave birth to that barbarous thirst,
Which of the strong against the weak, enkindled the
war.²

¹ Even ministers of the gospel at the South, both in the pulpit and in their writings, presented slavery as of divine institution.

² In 1442, the Portuguese captain, Anthony Gonzales, received in exchange for some Moorish prisoners, some gold-dust and *ten negroes*.

No more do they hunt for wild beasts,
Nor for their fellows to devour them,

But for whole tribes ! . . .

Then at evening, as the hunter
From the game at his feet lying,

To sate his hunger selects the choicest parts,
Ere he abandons the remains to the hounds ;
So, from the chase choosing the strongest,
They immolate women, children, old men . . .
And, dripping with the blood of the victims,
They drive towards the shore that human herd !

O Lord ! mayst Thou forgive the hand
Which, from these barbarians buying the victims,
For paltry ill-gotten lucre to its pomp added,
Into the new land with threatenings,
Imported from Africa the first captive¹ . . .

Jesus in the Temple, scourge in hand,
From the holy place drove out the merchants.

Oh ! why of a yet virgin land
Didst thou tarnish the future ?
Why didst thou, who callest thyself Christian,

¹ The introduction of slavery in the English colonies of America is due to the commercial spirit of the Dutch. The first consignment of human merchandise was made by a Dutch ship to the port of Jamestown, Virginia, in 1620.

Thou mother-country,
Into that garden, why didst thou
Introduce the forbidden fruit?
Why tempt man, serpent! . . .
Why thus throw the apple of discord
Amid that happy people?
Upon thee, mother-country, will rest the disgrace!
To thee will redound the shame!¹

III.

Gold, in a virtuous hand, pure metal!
Of the labours of each represents the value;
As the clear water from a spring flows,
And, everywhere slowly spreading
Refreshes and fertilizes . . .
On a soil yesterday sterile,
To-day brings forth flowers,
So, gold, from a virtuous hand flows,
And of the wretched consoling the miseries,
Of hail, storm, winds, retrieves the havoc.
The victor in that pacific race,

¹ If the Dutch actually were the first to introduce slavery in the English colonies, the British Government refused to the burgesses of Virginia to let them exclude slavery from among them by law. That refusal was one of the grievances set forth in the first draft of the Declaration of Independence, for separation from the mother country.

To his brother extending the hand,
 In the arena where their strength
 And activity compete, restores equality :
 That new efforts, by experience seconded,
 May perhaps crown with success
 Him whom at present he sustains.

This one in turn, to his brother opening his arms :
 ‘Take, take, brother,

 Harvests, fruits, that gold is thine ;
 Storm, hail, wind, of thy efforts have destroyed the reward ;
 I only render thee what last year,
 In my distress, thou lendedst me.’

But gold, in guilty hands accumulated,
 Vile metal ! . . .

Commands, compels, corrupts, infects,
 Until at last,

In the bosom of its oppressed victims,
 Raising of indignation the sacred wrath !

 The flood let loose
 Overwhelms the bounds which retained it captive !

IV.

One day, however, O human folly !
 Leaders of the young nation, wise in their own conceit,
 Said : Let Good and Evil be made to live in peace !

As would jockeys each by the other duped,
 Like two brothers they decided to share :
 And, upon horses by Sancho handed,
 New Don Quixotes, chalk in hand,
 In the space rushing,
 From the Atlantic to the Pacific
 With an imaginary line through the air traced,
 They divided their empire !¹ . . .
 As if to lead towards Good, there were more roads than
 one !

For, having read the mighty deeds of that good knight,
 Is it not more charitable to believe,
 That of his history their minds were dreaming,
 Than to think their genius by evil won,
 Coveting the possession of vile lucre
 To slake the thirst of a prince-like dissoluteness,
 Thus they would, with their hands, have derided their
 country !

As if ever the ambitious, their hunger satiated,
 On a light border arresting their steps,
 Could refrain from letting fall on a neighbour
 The weight of a hand armed by envy.

¹ In 1820, the bill termed ‘Missouri Compromise’ interdicted the introduction of slavery into territories lying north of $36^{\circ} 30'$ (the northern boundaries of Missouri), as a compensation for its (Missouri) admission into the Union as a slave state.

When, in the human body, of vices
 The gangrene spreads its ravages,
Compromise indeed would not stay its progress ;
 And in the yet sound part of the member affected,
 If the knife does not fearlessly cut,
 Then of the disease the only limit
 Shall be death ! . . .

So laborious an achievement concluded,
 On the altar by numerous libations
 Was scarcely consecrated,
 When the wind in raising the dust,
 Or, perhaps, by master cunning
 Some point at law or some profit forgotten,
 Of the deed of those giants effaced the trace :
 And Evil, untrammelled, thought to reign supreme !¹

v.

In the throes of a slow agony
 That unhappy people was vainly struggling,

¹ About 1853, by the Kansas-Nebraska Bill, the Missouri Compromise was virtually annulled, by incorporating the ‘Squatter Sovereignty’ principle, or the allowing territories to regulate their affairs without the interference of Congress. The practical result of it was, that the slaveholders of Missouri, in attempts to force the ‘peculiar institution’ in Kansas, situated north of their State, brought on a two-years’ war, waged with fire and sword, in 1855 and 1856.

When the imperilled nation,
So long hoodwinked by these pygmies,
Remembering that Jesus, for apostles
 Took simple fishermen ;
That Israel, in a day of distress,
To a shepherd entrusted her defence :
From bewilderment and anxiety emerged,
And to her head called . . . a plain backwoodsman.¹

Thus on the shield by the love of the people upheld,
 A just man appears !
Honest, simple, whose ambition is ‘to do well !’
 And of the Lord imploring help,
Asks that it may be given him
 To know . . . ‘what is well !’ . . .
By a perplexed people more is not needed
 To revive their drooping courage,
And in their hearts to inspire confidence :
 Of Good so simple is the operation !

The Protean subtleties of a prolix eloquence
Fell prostrate before the simplicity of honesty . . .
 As castles of cards,
By the hands of a child tediously raised,

¹ The election of Abraham Lincoln, in November 1860, was greatly assisted by the splitting in the Democratic party at its Convention in Charleston (South Carolina), as his nomination was devoutly wished by those who were seeking a pretext to secede.

At the gentlest motion of the air collapse ;
So, of ambition the duplicity,
The masterly learned calculations,
A disingenuous *expediency*
When in contact with his serene meekness,
As a light shadow vanish.
On the lips of the woodman,
A parable, an apostrophe, a word, a smile,
Are the terrible arms which
Of those Titans dissipate the plots !

Who would dare to say which of the works of nature,
Man or flesh-worm, is the marvel ?
The ways of God are to the eyes of men concealed.

VI.

Everywhere reigns a deep and gloomy silence.
The clouds heaped up, of the darkened sky veil the vault.
Men, of a friend, of a brother, pressing the hand,
In whispers express their fears.
In the fields, the herds bellowing, perplexed,
Towards some wall, to find a shelter, hasten !

From one sea to the other
Each and all are anxious.

Will the rays of the sun,
 Piercing the clouds, dispel them ?
 Will the storm, in a whirlwind
 Uprooting the time-honoured oak,
 Under its fragments bury
 The sacred ‘ Charter of Liberty ?’¹

Of the thunder rolling in the distance,
 The first shock everywhere in space resounds ;
 And in echoes repeated,
 Of the struggle gives the signal.²
 O fearful miracle ! The first streak of lightning
 Suddenly reveals, like a bloody stream,
 That line from ocean to ocean through the air traced . . .
 And on the faces of those men gathered in groups,
 By the flashes illumined, is written
 Who among them, on the north
 Or on the south of that fiery line,
 Will take his place for the battle :
 For of some, sacred awe and sadness furrow the brow ;
 While from the eyes of others,
 A sinister joy leaps with lurid glare !

¹ The charter granted to the colony of Connecticut was, in October 1687, hid in an oak at Hartford, in front of the house of a magistrate named Samuel Wyylys, to prevent its surrender to the new Governor, who had landed with orders to have it repealed.

² The first shot fired upon the United States flag struck the ‘Star of the West’ as she was entering Charleston harbour, in February 1861 (shortly before Lincoln’s presidential inauguration).

But stupor soon gives place to resolution,
 And the heroic phalanx
 At the voice of their chief goes forth !

VII.

Danger ; blood which already flows ;
 The banner of the nation by a brave vainly upheld ;¹
 Of the first shocks, the reverses humbling their pride ;²
 Perhaps also, God in His pity,
 Revived in their faithless memory,
 What in the recesses of their hearts
 Was not yet entirely effaced ;
 Revived the sacred hymn of their fathers !

‘ O Lord ! do not abandon us !
 Under the yoke of tyrants,
 In tears we were groaning . . .
 May Thy wrath fall upon us
 If, of the blows which struck us,
 Forgetting the wounds !
 If, of our chains by Thy hand broken,
 Forgetting the sores !

¹ Major Anderson surrendered the ruins of Fort Sumpter, with all the honours of war, on the 14th of April 1861.

² Battle of Bull’s Run, July 28, 1861.

If ever, under our laws, . . . under chains, . . .
Tyrants ourselves ! . . .
We should make the unfortunate groan !

' Better to perish than to be slaves !
To liberty we consecrate this land,
And on our retreating banners we inscribe :
" Let all who suffer come to us ! " '

. and in their camp,
In the wake of the first fugitive
Who, in his hand holding his chains,
Panting, cleared the threshold ;
Two virgins made their appearance . . .
Liberty ! . . . beckoning to victory !¹

VIII.

Throughout the vast continent, electricity
Spreads the news of an approaching peace.
Peace ! that word opens hearts :
For peace . . . it is family, hope, prosperity !
Peace : it is sorrow-laden breasts magically relieved, . . .
Scions of one family broken asunder,
Flinging away their fratricidal swords,

¹ The turning-point of the war soon followed the proclamation liberating the slaves, dated January 1863.

In a mother's fond embrace again united : . . .
 Tears without sobs will flow as dew.
 Peace ! it is fields covered with harvests,
 No more to be laid waste by the warrior's steed.
 Peace ! it is the joyous songs of children
 Which the echoes of the woods will again repeat,
 When in the heat of noon, the signal of the horn
 To the repast by his family prepared,
 Will under the shelter of his roof,
 Summon the labourer to rest.
 Peace ! it is : joy, hope, at last over the land spread,
 Which by the air carried, everywhere is breathed !

IX.

But what rumour comes anew to strike the ear,
 And of joy to suspend the transports ?
 At times it seems there are shrieks and moanings . . .
 Have some reverses suddenly
 To their miseries added their weight ? . . .
 Or can it be that, of the numberless victims,
 In horrid prisons by hunger and tortures to death sent,
 The spectres, noisily shaking their chains
 In a supreme effort to take before Eternity,
 For a last time their place around the paternal hearth,
 From the tomb have arisen !¹ . . .

¹ Unparalleled sufferings of prisoners of war in Libby prison, Richmond, and Andersonville, Georgia.

The moanings become more distinct ;
 The muffled sounds of bells, clarions, drums,
 The numbered thunderings of cannon,
 Inspire sombre, gloomy thoughts . . .
 At last appears a funeral cortege,
 A whole people in mourning.

In the midst of them a catafalque advances,
 And at its approach heads are uncovered.

But who is the victim ?

The father whom his weeping children
 Accompany to his last dwelling ?
 Boughs of laurels and oaks shade his brow . . .
 And his brow bleeds from a wound yet fresh . . .

O Lord ! He ! . . .

On his serene face dwells yet the sweet smile,
 Which the end of their misfortunes had lighted :

The smile which on his lips played
 When at his feet in Richmond, a despised race
 Towards him were raising the arms, by his voice made
 free.¹

O people ! is it he ? . . . The friend,
 The father, the pacifier, the saver,
 That God in His mercy to you had sent !

O people ! is it he ? . . . whom
 You thus escort through the land,
 To the humble roof which was his cradle ;

¹ President Lincoln entered Richmond, amid joyous demonstrations of the coloured people, but a few days only before his death.

That, far from the tumult of cities,
 In peace he may rest beneath the same bowers
 Where, when a child by his mother to virtue moulded,
 Of liberty he had formed the image, . . .
 From his lips had fallen the words :
 ‘I wish all men were free !’

x.

Under the blows of the wicked
 Bloom the flowers of martyrdom, . . .
 Modest violets in the greensward concealed,
 Whose perfume is revealed
 In the warmth of a bosom by love animated.
 Thus he whom they wished to humble,
 In that sad and glorious day rises immortal,
 Crowned with the palm of martyrdom ! . . .

What more beautiful eve could be thine, O Lincoln !
 On that day nineteen centuries now soon elapsed,¹
 By Pharisees insulted, dragged in dust,
 His forehead crowned with thorns,
 Jesus, gentle victim, died crucified !
 When, after three days of consternation and tears,
 Dawned the resplendent morn of the Resurrection,
 His immortal spirit rose radiant,

¹ Abraham Lincoln was assassinated on Good Friday, 14th April 1864.

And His kingdom,
On the eve measured by the stone of a sepulchre,
On the morrow had no earthly limit !

A long time also in secret they plotted thy ruin ;
A few days also of prostration and mourning,
And from the darkness of the tomb disenthralled,
The sentiment of Love and Truth by thy virtues inspired,
On both hemispheres found an echo !

xi.

Effaced for ever from the annals of the nation
Be the name of him who struck a head so dear to us !
In the last agony of a supreme crisis,
Of the tormentors, of the ambitious tyrants,
The cohort at bay, vanquished,
Recoiling . . . terrified . . .
With a fragment of a broken chain,
On the soil stained by the poisonous slime
Which, in their rage and mortal hate,
Was from their impure mouths falling ;
With a fragment of a broken chain by their hand hurled,
The victim was slain !¹ . . .

¹ It is less to the *man* who, like him who burnt the Ephesian temple, wished to perpetuate his memory, than to the *spirit* which dictated so many attempts on the liberty or life of Abraham Lincoln, that his death must be charged.

O people ! may that blood on thy head poured,
To God's tribunal offered in sacrifice,
For ever wash away thy crimes ! . . .

That on thy banners,
With the blood of so many victims,
In indelible characters be imprinted
The song of thy fathers :

' O Lord ! do not abandon us !
Under the yoke of tyrants,
In tears we were groaning . . .
May Thy wrath fall upon us
If, of the blows which struck us,
Forgetting the wounds !
If, of our chains by Thy hand broken,
Forgetting the sores !
If ever, under our laws, . . . under chains, . . .
Tyrants ourselves ! . . .
We should make the unfortunate groan !

' Better to perish than to be slaves !
To liberty we consecrate this land,
And on our victorious banners we inscribe :
" All men are created free and equal !
Let all who suffer come to us ! " '

XII.

O my son ! for that land yesterday convulsed,
A new era has come . . .
Purified in the ordeal of affliction
The people command their future.
To fulfil the covenant of their forefathers,
Securing to all mankind the fruits of victory,
—Equal justice before the majesty of the law !
They may, calm and magnanimous,
To their misguided brothers opening their arms,
With love dispel their sorrows ;
And with that divine balm, heal their wounds.
Of the World, of Humanity,
Love is the saviour, the holy law !
On those faces where lately reigned
Suffering and bitterness, pride and hate,
Love may soon spread the sweet smile of virtue ;
For man made in the image of God,
On his face reflected, carries the impress
Of the virtues or vices which in his heart dwell !

O my son, my beloved son !
The plaintive strains which the wind brought to thee,
Into joyous songs are transforming ;

Amidst harvests and flowers,
Upon the enamelled green the happy child will play.

Amerie ! thy affianced well-beloved !
Wearing upon her brow the virginal crown,
To the altar by thy Grandsire led,
From thy hand before God,
Shall receive the nuptial ring !

A P P E N D I X.

EXTRACT FROM MARMONTEL'S *COURS DE LITTERATURE.*

ARE *verses* so essential to poetry, that to deprive the latter of them would be to annihilate it?

I am far from thinking that vapid prose, uncoloured and without animation, may replace them. I believe even a poem written in prose would call for a fulness of ideas, of sentiment and images, a fervour, a continuity of interest, which *verses* may dispense with, for the reason that the peculiarity of their mechanism may sometimes be able at intervals to amuse, to occupy the ear. But supposing all the poetical beauties, whether of style or of thought, united in a work,—invention, design, arrangement, truthfulness of imitation, the colouring and harmony of prose—in two words, painting and eloquence in the highest degree,—would this no longer be poetry, as soon as were wanting the number of syllables, the pauses and the concord which characterize our *verses*? Habit has made them doubtless more pleasant to our ears; and an infinity of weak and ordinary things have passed under the favour of the illusion with which *verses* have beguiled the ear. But the beauty of the pictures, of the images which poetry presents to us, the pathetic features with which it penetrates us, do they need this seduction to be admired, to be felt? Will its nature be changed by renouncing one of its means, and the most fantastical one of all?

Poetry is a painting which speaks, or, if you will, a language which paints. The perfection of art would be to portray at the same time to the mind, as well as to convey to the ear. But if it excels in portraying to the mind only, would not something be effected? Should it, instead of confining its ideas within the bounds of a rhythmical verse, apply itself to taking advantage of the liberty of prose, in order to vary the movements, the intervals, and the pauses, at the will of the soul and of the ear; if this harmonious prose is more animated by the colouring of a figurative style, by the warmth of an eloquence sometimes soft and tender, sometimes lively and glowing; finally, if we find in this style the character of the ideal beauty that distinguishes great productions of art,—that is, a degree of strength, richness, correctness, precision, and elegance, which seems taken from nature, but which, however, never belongs to it,—will not this be still enough to make it poetry?

Prose, to this degree of perfection, is perhaps as difficult and rare as are beautiful verses—perhaps even more so, by reason of its not having prescribed formulas. But while we accord to verses a greater merit, and an agreeableness of fancy to which prose would lay no claim, I cannot subscribe to the opinion which has made them exclusively the language of poetry. I admire, as much as is possible, poets who excel in the art of writing in verse. I am practised in it myself, and I feel too deeply the price of a talent to which habit has given so much power and charm, to advise those who possess it to neglect this advantage; but I shall always believe that the writer who may not be thus gifted, will still have the right to say, while expressing in harmonious prose all which in nature is most animated, most affecting, most sublime,—

‘And I, also, am a poet.’



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